

before, during, and after emergencies, and those records needed to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and persons affected by Government activities. The records may be maintained on a variety of media including paper, magnetic tape or disk, photographic film, and microfilm. The management of vital records is part of an agency's continuity of operations plan designed to meet emergency management responsibilities.

§ 1236.12 Authority.

Heads of agencies are responsible for the vital records program under the following authorities:

(a) To make and preserve records containing adequate and proper documentation of the agency's organization, functions, policies, procedures, decisions, and essential transactions, and to furnish information to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and of persons directly affected by the agency's activities (44 U.S.C. 3101).

(b) To perform national security emergency preparedness functions and activities (Executive Order 12656).

§ 1236.14 Definitions.

Basic records management terms are defined in 36 CFR 1220.14. As used in part 1236:

Contingency planning means instituting policies and procedures to mitigate the effects of potential emergencies or disasters on an agency's operations and records. Contingency planning is part of the continuity of operations planning required under Federal Preparedness Circulars and other guidance issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Executive Order 12656.

Cycle means the periodic removal of obsolete copies of vital records and their replacement with copies of current vital records. This may occur daily, weekly, quarterly, annually or at other designated intervals.

Disaster means an unexpected occurrence inflicting widespread destruction and distress and having long-term adverse effects on agency operations. Each agency defines what a long-term adverse effect is in relation to its most critical program activities.

Emergency means a situation or an occurrence of a serious nature, developing suddenly and unexpectedly, and demanding immediate action. This is generally of short duration, for example, an interruption of normal agency operations for a week or less. It may involve electrical failure or minor flooding caused by broken pipes.

Emergency operating records are that type of vital records essential to the continued functioning or reconstitution of an organization during and after an emergency. Included are emergency plans and directive(s), orders of succession, delegations of authority, staffing assignments, selected program records needed to continue the most critical agency operations, as well as related policy or procedural records that assist agency staff in conducting operations under emergency conditions and for resuming normal operations after an emergency.

Legal and financial rights records are that type of vital records essential to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and of the individuals directly affected by its activities. Examples include accounts receivable records, social security records, payroll records, retirement records, and insurance records. These records were formerly defined as "rights-and-interests" records.

National security emergency means any occurrence, including natural disaster, military attack, technological emergency, or other emergency, that seriously degrades or threatens the national security of the United States, as defined in Executive Order 12656.

Off-site storage means a facility other than an agency's normal place of business where vital records are stored for protection. This is to ensure that the vital records are not subject to damage or destruction from an emergency or disaster affecting an agency's normal place of business.

Vital records mean essential agency records that are needed to meet operational responsibilities under national security emergencies or other emergency or disaster conditions (emergency operating records) or to protect the legal and financial rights of the